

Effective January 1, 2016 Morinville Community Library will be closed Mondays



December 16, 2015

The Morinville Public Library is a bustling, vibrant community space that provides key services to many residents of Morinville and Sturgeon County; like all municipal services, however, it costs money to run the library (which is a not-for-profit organization).

2016 is going to be a tough financial year for the Morinville Public Library (MPL). At the root of our financial problem is Sturgeon County and the fact it grossly underfunds the library, a service many of its residents access (in fact, over 40% of MPL's membership reside in Sturgeon County).

In their 2016 Budget, Sturgeon County has decided to provide MPL with \$3,000 in funding from their own coffers (which represents 0.5% of MPL's total budget). The County continues to maintain that provincial funding, in the amount of \$54,000, which comes through the County to MPL, should somehow suffice as their portion of library funding. This line of thinking is not only unfair to the Morinville tax payer (who pays the brunt of library funding) but it's also illogical.

Sturgeon County no doubt expects its citizens to pay for the services the County provides, in the form of taxes. What would happen if County residents decided they don't want to pay their tax bill anymore because, heck, the County receives provincial funding, like an MSI Grant? That provincial money should suffice, right?

The Morinville Public Library Board of Trustees is not the only group who believes Sturgeon County is grossly underfunding MPL and taking advantage of the Morinville tax payer. On December 8, during a town council meeting, Morinville's council expressed similar sentiments. Morinville's Mayor, Lisa Holmes, publicly stated that the town's taxpayers are taking on the burden left by Sturgeon County's decision and it's not fair.

As a way to "send a message" to the County, Morinville's council voted in favour of reducing MPL's funding request for 2016 by \$30,000. We greatly appreciate the town's funding and fully acknowledge our library could not operate without the money the town allocates to us; however, the town's decision to send a message to the County in this way, will have negative impacts on MPL's operations and service levels in the coming year.

Because we do not have enough funding, MPL will now have to close its doors to residents on Mondays, starting January 1, 2016 and half of the library staff will now be faced with reduced hours. Instead of trying to "send a message" to Sturgeon County though cutting our funding request, why not pick up the phone—call Sturgeon County, talk to them when you meet during your Inter-municipal Affairs Committee, for example, and demand the county pay its fair share.

When it comes down to it, Morinville's council is doing a disservice to its taxpayers by allowing Sturgeon County to remain unaccountable in their decision to not appropriately pay for a municipal service many of its residents use and depend on. In 2016, Sturgeon County's tax payers will pay \$3,000 to the Morinville Public Library—Morinville's tax payers will cover \$373,780 (125x more). It's wrong, especially considering nearly half of the people who use the library are from Sturgeon County.

In tough economic times, a community's library is more important than ever. It's where families go to access affordable entertainment in the form of books, music, movies, and programming. It's where many people come to use computers to look for a job. The library allows people who are trying to upgrade their education through correspondence to come and take their official exams and it provides mobile services to many seniors and people with limited mobility, who cannot physically come out to the library.

To say we are disappointed in the outcome of Sturgeon County's 2016 Budget decision is an understatement. If you, as a patron of MPL, are also disappointed in how the funding decisions have played out over the past month, we urge you to speak to your respective councillors and tell them this funding issue needs to be rectified.

Respectfully,

Keith Norris, Chair of the Town of Morinville Library Board
on behalf of the Morinville Library Board of Trustees